

Framework concept paper

Connecting Voices

How digital tools bring together

mini and maxi publics

**MAKE.
ORG**

DEMOS

go
vocal

Thinks
— Insight & Strategy —

**MEHR
DEMOKRATIE**

A new model of citizens' participation combining deliberative depth and participatory scale.

This is especially important at a time when the options for digital participation are expanding rapidly, including through AI-enabled tools that make it much easier to gather, sort, and synthesise input at scale.

They will help widen access, lower costs, and make it easier to connect broader publics to more intensive deliberative processes.



Linking mini- and maxi-publics through digital tools offers a range of practical benefits for both participants and decision-makers.

- Offline participants saw that wider public care about issue
- Creates a series of opportunities to persistently participate
- Reaches wider networks with the use of meso-publics
- Partnering with civil society to tell the story of mini-public to broader public
- Engaging with existing spaces (Whatsapp, Chatico) makes the participation more inclusive, visible and actionable



Linkage between mini- and maxi-publics is not straightforward. Several challenges may arise.

1. Translating scale into substance
2. Achieving legitimacy through reach and representation
3. Sustaining quality in participation and deliberation
4. Designing for impact and accountability
5. Balancing scope, duration and feasibility
6. Building and sustaining engagement over time
7. Infrastructure, integration and resources



Solutions to overcome these designing challenges.

1. Strong and inclusive analysis to synthesise digital input
2. Define legitimacy case by case
3. Apply robust digital systems
4. Ensure clear follow-up and traceability
5. Design each process based on its specific context
6. Use feedback loops, recognition, and re-engagement
7. Prioritise solid, interoperable systems



8 guiding questions for designing your participation model.

1. When is the maxi public activated?
2. Do you set up a login online?
3. Where does the online part take place?
4. How are offline and online linked?
5. Is there a rebound?
6. Who ratifies the final output(s)?
7. How are online contributions analysed?
8. To whom is the online analysis directed to?



4 examples to inspire your participation model.

Forum gegen Fakes

A large-scale, multi-phase public consultation aimed at co-creating practical solutions to tackle misinformation in Germany.

MAKE.
ORG

Change NHS

Inclusive engagement of patients, staff, and partner organisations to shape the development of England's 10-Year Health Plan.

Thinks
— insight & strategy —

go
vocal

Waves

A project combining large-scale participation with meaningful deliberation to rebuild trust between citizens and local government.

DEMOS


Klima trifft Kommune

An innovative participatory governance model in Germany to develop democratically legitimate solutions for local climate issues.

CONSUL
DEMOCRACY

MEHR
DEMOKRATIE





**Check out the
framework
concept paper!**

Framework and blog post linked.

The organisations involved

The logo for MAKE.ORG, featuring the word "MAKE." in blue and "ORG" in red, both in a bold, sans-serif font, enclosed in a rounded rectangular border.

A neutral, independent civic tech organisation focused on building technology for democratic purposes.

The logo for go vocal, with "go" in a smaller font above "vocal", and a red checkmark-like symbol below "vocal", all enclosed in a rounded rectangular border.

A B Corp certified company dedicated to making democracy more inclusive, participatory, and responsive through its community engagement platform.

The logo for DEMOS, with the word "DEMOS" in a serif font, where the "O" is orange and the other letters are dark blue, enclosed in a rounded rectangular border.

Works to upgrade democracy in the UK by building systems rooted in trust, information, and technology.

The logo for Thinks, with "Thinks" in a serif font and "Insight & Strategy" in a smaller sans-serif font below it, enclosed in a rounded rectangular border.

Brings citizens, stakeholders, and customers into organizational decision-making through participatory, deliberative, and digital engagement.

The logo for MEHR DEMOKRATIE, featuring a blue square with a white exclamation mark to the left of the text "MEHR DEMOKRATIE" in a sans-serif font, enclosed in a rounded rectangular border.

A non-profit organisation dedicated to strengthening direct democracy, citizen participation, and electoral reform in Germany and the EU.